

WOMAN'S COUNCIL TABLE.

REMEDIES PERMISSIBLE IN HOUSEHOLD MEDICINE.

BY H. A. HARE, M.D.

I.

IT is very difficult to dogmatically exclude certain remedies from household medicine, simply because conditions may arise which would justify their employment, or other conditions which would render them positively harmful. What is said on this topic, therefore, will have to be taken in the light of a general rule rather than a specific statement concerning any individual case.

One remedy which can be used with great frequency and often with great benefit in household medicine is that which is popularly known as the sweet spirit of niter, which is employed, as many persons know, for the purpose of allaying moderate fever and nervous excitement, particularly when these symptoms arise in young children. It is given to a child in a dose of from ten to twenty drops, generally in cold water, and this may be repeated every two hours during the night. As a rule it tends to increase the activity of the kidneys and also the activity of the skin, so that as the temperature falls the child frequently breaks out into a slight perspiration. These doses, or ones which are slightly larger, are entirely harmless in practically every disease which will be met with, and it is only when very large doses, amounting to several teaspoonfuls, are given at once that sweet spirit of niter has the power of doing great harm. In the dose of an ounce or two given by mistake it has caused death, so that it cannot be considered an absolutely innocuous drug in any quantity.

It is a curious fact that if given in very cold water, and when the patient is lightly covered, sweet spirit of niter will act chiefly on the kidneys, whereas if it is given in a hot lemonade to which has been added a little whiskey or brandy, and if at the same time the patient is warmly covered in

bed, it will very frequently produce a profuse sweat and so will tend to break up a forming cold. This drug should be bought in small quantities and a fresh supply obtained each time it is needed, as it is a remedy which loses its medicinal activity if it is exposed to light and air for any considerable period of time; moreover the cork in a bottle of sweet spirit of niter very soon becomes imperfect and as a result the medicine loses its value.

Brandy, whiskey, and other stimulants which depend upon the alcohol they contain for their chief medicinal activity, if used at all in household medicine, should be administered with great caution. Aside from the abuse of these drugs from the moral standpoint they are very much abused by the friends of persons who are ill, particularly in the event of sudden illness. It seems to be the general idea of many persons that when an accident occurs whiskey or brandy is at once needed by the patient. As a general rule, unless they are ordered by a physician you should refrain from administering these powerful stimulants, as they frequently do more harm than good.

I well remember the case of a young man whose kneecap was dislocated on the football field, to whom his friends gave so much whiskey, because he was slightly faint from the accident, that by the time the patient was removed to the hospital he was so violently intoxicated that nothing could be done for his damaged limb except to bind it up on a pillow and wait until the effects of certain sedatives quieted him. In another instance a member of the United States Congress who suffered from a slight attack of apoplexy, which is a hemorrhage into the brain, received so much whiskey from solicitous friends that his heart was stimulated to increased exertion and after temporary im-

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provement the hemorrhage into his brain came on again and he speedily died, although there was reason to believe that the first hemorrhage was so small as not to be fatal. In this case the friends of the patient were to a great extent responsible for his death.

When you have decided that whiskey or brandy are needed as stimulants in cases of faintness, you should remember that they are to be given in a hot and concentrated form, because all liquids which are taken into the stomach must be warmed to the temperature of the body before they are absorbed. If this were not true, after drinking a glass of ice-water we would be in the awkward predicament of feeling the ice-cold fluid circulating through our blood-vessels. If, therefore, you give whiskey or brandy in cold water it cannot be absorbed and exert its stimulating effect until the liquid is sufficiently warmed, and this may cause the loss of valuable time. Further, if you dilute the brandy with too much water all the liquid must be absorbed before the patient gets the benefit of the stimulant. Thus, if the brandy is given in a tablespoonful of hot water the stomach can absorb this quantity in a very few minutes, whereas if it is given in a half pint of hot water it will take many minutes before this quantity of liquid will be taken up by the blood-vessels, and while it lies in the stomach it is as useless to the patient as if it lay in the palm of his hand.

There are other stimulants which are largely prepared by manufacturing druggists or by retail druggists and widely advertised to the laity—such substances as the various wines or other preparations of cocoa or kola, both of which are very powerful nervous stimulants, closely associated in their action with that of caffeine, the active ingredient in ordinary coffee. It is of the greatest importance to remember that all these substances are nervous stimulants which enable the body for a short time to put out a little more force, with a corresponding increase in exhaustion afterward. They are nothing but “whips applied to the tired horse,” to make him do more work when in reality he should be obtaining rest. The person who resorts to these remedies, misled by the

false assertions of those whose interest it is to sell them, will in the end find himself a nervous and physical wreck, because, like a careless banker, he has not only utilized his ordinary amount of strength, but called upon his reserves, which ought to have been kept for the proper maintenance of his vital functions.

Physicians constantly see patients who would be horror-stricken at the idea of being devoted to the whiskey or brandy bottle but who seem to think that there is no possible harm in resorting to wines of cocoa or kola with or without other ingredients. In many instances these wines contain such a large quantity of alcohol that in addition to the stimulating effect of their medicinal ingredients they produce an effect equivalent to that induced by a drink of whiskey. They should therefore be employed only under the direction of a physician, and should a physician order them the prescription calling for them is not to be renewed indefinitely, excepting under his advice.

The same objections exist against the employment of all those preparations of bromide and caffeine which are utilized under different combined names in the treatment of headache, and very much the same objection exists, too, against many of the so-called headache powders or tablets which are now placed upon the market for the use of the unwary. These powders nearly always contain caffeine, which is a stimulant, and they also contain some drug derived from coal-tar, which when taken continuously or in overdose acts deleteriously upon the blood. I refer to such remedies as phenacetin, antipyrin, and acetanilide. It is true that they do relieve headache in many cases, but they should be used with caution. You should remember that a headache is a symptom, not a disease, and that it is a symptom of many diseases, ranging all the way from so serious affections as Bright's disease and brain tumor to the headache due to lack of sleep. The removal of the symptom “headache” in a person suffering from Bright's disease may give such temporary relief that the patient will ignore the condition of his kidneys and go to a physician only when

his state is so serious that his headache cannot be put aside by these means, and when it is perhaps too late for him to gain any benefit from treatment. In many instances of nervous headache, quiet, rest, a suitable amount of sleep, and a proper regulation of the diet are what the patient needs, and using headache powders is simply postponing the evil day, with compound interest to pay in the end.

Finally, let me warn you in regard to the use of all stimulants. They never add nourishment to the body. As I have said before, they are "whips" which call into play those powers meant for reserve, and nothing can be more harmful than to

keep on day after day whipping up a tired nervous system by powerful stimulants.

It is hardly necessary to call attention to the fact that the constant use of opium or morphine or preparations containing this drug is exceedingly deleterious, and that it is very easy to slip into the opium habit by taking a little laudanum or morphia whenever a slight pain or ache appears. I have known cases in which nervous women developed a paregoric habit and in the end had to be treated not only for the opium habit but for the alcohol habit, because they took paregoric in such quantities that they became partially intoxicated from the alcohol which it contains.

ANNUAL FLOWERS AND THEIR CULTURE.

BY EBEN E. REXFORD.

TO have success with annuals one must begin right. A great many persons simply scratch over the surface of the ground with a hoe or rake, sow their seed carelessly, and consider the garden made. Such persons always fail to have good flowers and wonder why. The answer is a simple one—they did not go to work right.

The first thing to do is to spade up the soil well to the depth of at least a foot. Do this as soon as the ground is in a fair working condition in spring. Then let it lie, exposed to the action of sun and wind, until it will crumble readily under the hoe. Then pulverize it well. You cannot make it too fine and mellow. If it is not naturally rich, see that it is made so by the application of some good fertilizer. If you can obtain old, rotten manure from a cow-yard you will be fortunate, for nothing is better for most plants, but if this is not obtainable use finely ground bone meal, applying about half a pound to each square yard of soil. Whatever fertilizer is used should be worked in well.

Do not be in too great a hurry about sowing seed. Nothing is gained by haste, and often all is lost by it. At the North we are

pretty sure to have cold spells of weather until the middle of May. It is well to wait until we are reasonably sure of warm, settled weather before putting seed into the ground.

Sow evenly, and scatter fine soil over the seed. Then press it down firmly with a smooth board. This makes the scattered soil compact, and helps it to retain moisture until the seed beneath it has time to germinate.

As soon as your plants are large enough to show the difference between themselves and weeds, begin to pull the latter. Weeding is the rock on which most amateur florists make utter shipwreck of their attempts at gardening. They let the weeds grow until they get the start of the flowering plants, and by that time they have so completely taken possession of the garden that it is too late to reclaim it. Weeding must be begun as soon as you can tell the weed from the flower, and it must be kept up persistently as long as weeds continue to appear. It may not be pleasant work but it is very necessary work, and unless it is attended to you cannot expect success. Bear this in mind, and do not attempt gardening unless you are willing to pull the weeds that you will be sure to find springing up everywhere among your flowers. By doing this

at the beginning, and keeping at it, you will soon become master of the situation.

I would not advise trying to grow a little of everything, as so many persons do. A few kinds, well grown, will be found much more satisfactory than many kinds not well grown. Therefore concentrate your efforts.

You will, of course, want sweet peas. They will make your garden beautiful, and every day you will cut from them for use in the house and for gifts to your friends. No garden is complete without this lovely and lovable flower.

For showy beds we have nothing superior to the petunia. It is a wonderfully free and constant bloomer, lasting till severe frost. The phlox is also very desirable for beds. I would advise buying packages of seed in which each color is by itself, and getting only three colors, rose, white, and pale yellow. These colors harmonize finely, but from packages of mixed seed you will be likely to get many plants of magenta, crimson, and lilac, and these will give a discordant note in your color-scheme.

Nasturtiums are excellent for cutting. They do not do as well in a rich soil as in a moderately fertile one. If the soil is rich, there will be a most luxuriant growth of branches and few flowers.

Balsams like a sunny location. In order to have their flowers seen to advantage clip away some of the foliage along the branches.

Every garden should have a bed of poppies and one of marigolds—both “old-fashioned,” but all the better for that. The little “velvet” marigolds are charming for cut work.

For a bed of brilliant effect you can choose nothing superior to coreopsis, with its rich golden flowers, marked with maroon. This, too, is excellent for cutting.

For late flowering, the aster is the best annual we have. It is really a rival of the chrysanthemum in beauty. Be sure to include it in your list.

Of course there will be pansies. These are really not annuals, but they bloom the first year from seed and are generally classed among the annuals. They will give their finest flowers in fall, after cool weather sets

in. I have never seen a garden that seemed to have too many of these lovely flowers in it. We never tire of them. The florists have made wonderful improvements in them by careful cultivation and some of the recently introduced “strains” give us flowers that are gorgeous in coloring without being gaudy. A pansy is never that, no matter how many or how brilliant colors it may array itself in. Of all flowers it seems to me the most human, and if I could have but one plant for my garden that plant should be a pansy.

One of the most charming flowering vines we have is the good old morning-glory, with its trumpet-shaped blossoms of white, pink, crimson, and blue, so freely produced that the vines are literally covered with them during the early part of the day. Do not let any “craze” for novelties lead you to overlook this dear old flower. If it were new the catalogues would exhaust the entire list of superlative-degree adjectives in describing its beauty. It is none the less deserving attention because it is old—indeed it deserves it all the more, because age has proved its merit. For covering verandas and training up about doors and windows it is the best summer vine we have.

You will want mignonette for fragrance. A spray of it will add to the sweetness of every bouquet you give away and work in most charmingly among the flowers you cut for use in the house. It is not showy, but it has a quiet little beauty all its own in its quaker-like blooms.

The gladiolus is not an annual, but it is a flower that should have a place in every garden. It is of the very easiest cultivation. Any one can grow it. Give it a soil of moderate richness, plant the corms five or six inches deep at “corn-planting time,” and keep the weeds away from it, and it asks no more. It blossoms in August, continuing well into September, and its great spikes of bloom have all the delicacy of a lily combined with the rich coloring of an orchid. The range of colors is wide—white, pale yellow, rose, lilac, cherry, crimson, scarlet, purple, mauve, and magenta—and many varieties combine several of these

THE PAYMENT OF PENSIONS IN WASHINGTON.

BY JOSEPHINE RICKLES.

ONE of the most interesting places in the beautiful city of Washington, at least four times a year, is the United States pension agency. It is situated on the corner of Third and F Streets, diagonally across from the "big red barn," as Washingtonians term the pension building where the last four inaugural balls have been held. The agency is a modest looking building, and would easily be taken for a private residence were it not for the stars and stripes waving from the third-story window and the big gold letters, "U. S. P. A.," over the entrance door.

However unimposing it may look, there is more real, hard labor done in that little office than in many of the larger departments. There is disbursed from this office annually over eight millions of dollars to the "old veterans," whose pensions reach them in nearly every civilized part of the world—Asia, Africa, the Fiji and Sandwich Islands, India, Australia, China, and Japan—the government bearing all expenses of postage.

There were formerly on the rolls of the

D. C. agency eight thousand "personals," who came to the agency themselves, every three months, to receive their pensions, although quite a number of those living in the district preferred to have their checks mailed. Mrs. Logan and Mrs. Sheridan usually called for theirs. It was a pathetic sight, this tri-monthly assemblage of old soldiers and the widows and orphans of their dead comrades. The majority were crippled, blind, or totally disabled, yet all patiently waited their turn in being paid. On the morning they were to be paid, one might see a line of old soldiers extending the length of three blocks; also a crowd about the door, some of the poorer class having slept in the adjoining park in order to get their checks before beginning their day's labor. The clerks commenced to pass out checks at 6:30 a. m., and from then until ten o'clock, when about sixteen hundred had received checks, there was a crowd of pushing, hurrying people. From ten o'clock until 5 p. m. there was a smaller number, and those who

about ten days. It is often remarked that the work must be very light during the time intervening from one quarter to the next. This is a mistaken idea, however, as the time is fully occupied in preparing for the succeeding payment.

sioners of the United States residing in foreign countries on June 30, 1896, was 3,781, and the amount paid them during the year was \$582,735.38. The tendency of the pension roll is to diminish, from natural causes, unless it is increased by legislation.

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BY H. A. HARE, M. D.

II.

IN the different stages of a disease frequent changes are made in the medicine prescribed for the patient, and thus, unless great care is exercised, a stock of half emptied bottles accumulates. It is a very common thing for the economical housewife to retain these bottles and the medicine they contain, with the idea that they may be useful in some future illness, and this very frequently leads to a domestic prescribing of powerful medicines for conditions which seem to the untrained mind identical with those for which the physicians originally ordered them. Even supposing that the ingredients ordered for the first case are suitable to the treatment of the second, it is by

no means certain that the quantities of the ingredients are suitable to both cases. Thus it is a self-evident fact that in cold weather every one needs an overcoat, yet every one does not need the same size of overcoat, and so in an illness all patients suffering from the same disease do not require the same dose. Hence I would urge the importance of always throwing away all bottles of medicine ordered by physicians after their use has been discontinued in the particular case for which they were ordered.

By far the best means of doing good to members of your family who may be stricken with acute illness is by the use of external applications, which consist in liniments for rubbing, mustard plasters for counter-irri-

tants, or hot foot-baths for the purpose of overcoming congestions due to cold or other causes. The great mistake which is made in the use of the foot-bath ordinarily, when an endeavor is being made to break up a forming cold, is in allowing the patient to walk about the room after the bath is over, thereby chilling the very part of the body in which the circulation has been increased, and driving the blood back into the previously congested blood-vessels. A hot foot-bath should not be given until the patient is actually ready for bed, and his feet should not touch the floor after they are removed from the water. While it is being given he should be wrapped in a blanket, and often the efficiency of the bath is increased by adding to the water a teaspoonful to a table-spoonful of mustard flour.

In regard to liniments, let me warn you of the fact that most of the liniments which have great power for good contain sufficiently large quantities of such powerful drugs as ammonia, chloroform, aconite, or opium to produce serious or even fatal poisoning if taken internally, and therefore bottles containing liniments should not be placed in the closet with bottles containing medicines for internal use. Further than this, liniment bottles should always be of a peculiar shape or bear a mark so startling or peculiar in its appearance as to call attention to the fact that the liniment is poisonous if taken internally.

Again, I cannot urge you too strongly to avoid the dangerous practice of attempting to administer medicine when the light is not good. All medical men of large experience have frequently met with cases in which patients have placed a bottle of medicine to their lips and taken a draught of its contents in a dark room, under the impression that there was "only one bottle upon that shelf," when in reality some other member of the family had placed other bottles there. In this way serious cases of poisoning have occurred. In other instances a wife rising in the night to give some medicine to her husband or child has picked up the wrong bottle in the dim light and administered a fatal dose, with terrible result.

Where medicine is ordered in drops you should always obtain a medicine dropper from a drug-store and avoid attempting to drop the medicine from the bottle, as it requires a very steady hand and accurate counting to avoid a mistake.

Again, you should remember that teaspoons vary considerably in size, and should the medicine be a powerful one and be ordered in teaspoonful doses the safest way is to administer it in a medicine-glass which has been carefully marked in quantities.

Let me say a word also in regard to the application of counter-irritants. These are useful in the treatment of internal pains, such as colic arising from indigestion. They rarely do harm and often give great relief. The only harm of which they are capable is that the plaster, which is generally made of mustard, when applied too strong produces a burn on the skin. This burn is not only exceedingly painful but is frequently followed by pigmentation, or discoloration, of the skin, so that the person bears for many months afterward, and sometimes for life, such a discoloration as to mar his appearance. This is particularly apt to be the case if the patient have a particularly fine, delicate white skin, and in the case of women who desire to wear low-neck dresses an application of a plaster to the chest during a severe cold may result in their being unable to wear anything but a high-neck dress for many months afterward. If this is the case the thanks which the patient was willing to offer for the first relief are soon turned into expressions of disgust which last very much longer than the protestations of delight at the relief of pain.

Mustard flour when it is used in the preparation of a mustard plaster is best moistened by means of hot brandy or hot vinegar, and it is always best to weaken it with ordinary wheat flour. When a plaster is applied to a person who is suffering much pain the relief which it gives frequently permits the patient to go to sleep, and he may be so exhausted that he sleeps notwithstanding the burning sensation. It is under these circumstances that a burn of the skin most frequently results.

One very useful form of counter-irritation in place of a mustard plaster is what is known as a turpentine stupe. This is made as follows: A piece of moderately thick flannel is folded several times until it is about six inches square. It is then allowed to soak in a bowl of very hot water and some turpentine is placed in a tin cup, which is then set in another bowl of hot water in order that the turpentine may be heated without its coming in contact with the flame. (For should you endeavor to heat turpentine over a gas-jet or over a stove it will probably explode and produce serious burns.) By means of a pair of scissors or a hairpin the folded flannel is quickly picked out of the hot water and dropped on a large towel. The ends of the towel are then twisted so that the flannel is thoroughly wrung out and freed from all excess of hot water. It is next dropped in the cup of turpentine and after being thoroughly saturated with the turpentine is wrung out in a towel a second time in order to get out the excess of this drug. The flannel is now moistened with the hot water and turpentine and yet is not so wet as to drip. It is placed wherever the pain may be and kept in position. In a very short time it produces a considerable

amount of irritation, which usually relieves the pain. This application is quite capable of producing serious irritation, and should not be allowed to remain on too long, as it may blister a tender skin. Neither the turpentine stupe nor the mustard plaster should be applied to young children, as they produce too much irritation, unless the turpentine in the one case or the mustard in the other is so thoroughly diluted as to lose a large amount of its irritant influence. If they are applied in too strong form they not only cause great pain and excessive irritation of the skin but in addition may make the child exceedingly restless and even feverish.

Finally, let me warn you against one common habit, which is closely connected with the use of bottles containing old medicines, and is strongly condemned by oculists, who most frequently meet with it—the habit of preserving old medicine-droppers which have been used for dropping fluids into the eye. Quite frequently powerful medicines dry in these droppers and when they are used some months afterward for the introduction of eye-washes they produce symptoms which very seriously alarm the patient and which may to some extent mystify the practitioner.

A CHAUTAUQUA IDYL.

BY JOHN HUSTON FINLEY.

I HEAR 'mid voices of the night
The swish of wave that tells the flight
Of unseen boat across the lake,
Upon whose shore I lie awake
And think of things supernal,
Dim visioning th' eternal,
Till sleep comes on.

And then I sit by other lake;
I hear shore-echoes of the wake
Of other craft. A spirit bark,
Unseen, plows on athro' the dark,
That swift shall bear me thither,
Whence it has brought me hither—
When death comes on.